



May 13, 2013

Ms. Lynn Peterson  
Secretary of Transportation  
WSDOT  
310 Maple Park Avenue SE  
Olympia, WA 98504-7300

RE: McMillin Bridge

Dear Ms. Peterson,

In 2011, the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation included the McMillin Bridge in our list of the year's Most Endangered Historic Places. Through this list, the Washington Trust highlights a variety of preservation-related challenges and opportunities facing historic properties across the state. The goal of the Most Endangered List is to work with all stakeholders in an effort to reach a positive preservation outcome for those historic resources identified each year. The Washington State Department of Transportation's (WSDOT) proposal to demolish the McMillin Bridge, located along SR162 at the crossing of the Puyallup River in Pierce County, prompted its inclusion in our 2011 List.

When completed in 1935, the McMillin Bridge stood as the longest reinforced concrete span (excluding arches) ever built in the United States. Homer Hadley devised the plan for the bridge, taking inspiration from the use of concrete for bridge construction being employed in Europe and considered technologically advanced at the time. Due to its historic significance, the McMillin Bridge is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Earlier this year, the Pierce County Landmarks Commission unanimously recommended designation of the bridge as a county landmark (a committee of the Pierce County Council recently approved this recommendation – a final designation hearing in front of the full County Council will be scheduled later this month).

While structurally sound, WSDOT has identified the McMillin Bridge as functionally obsolete, necessitating the construction of a new bridge for the Puyallup River crossing. Construction of a new bridge requires a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE). WSDOT's permit request to construct a new bridge includes removal of the existing McMillin Bridge. In our view, these two actions are unnecessarily intertwined. It is not necessary to remove the McMillin Bridge in order to construct the new bridge. In fact, the proposed project calls for retention of the McMillin Bridge to carry traffic until the new bridge is completed.

At the core of the issue is future ownership of the McMillin Bridge. In the alternatives analysis prepared for the project, WSDOT acknowledges being unopposed to the McMillin Bridge remaining

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in place, provided another entity assumes ownership of the bridge. The Washington Trust appreciates the fiscal responsibility WSDOT bears as a public agency, but believes stewardship responsibility for the McMillin Bridge remains with WSDOT given the resource's historic significance and the local support demonstrated for its preservation. WSDOT's continued ownership of the Indian Timothy Bridge in eastern Washington following decommission from vehicular use provides an example. We furthermore believe viable partnership opportunities exist with Pierce County and interested community groups that have yet to be fully explored. Pierce County has declined to take outright ownership of the bridge, but officials have not ruled out a partnership arrangement that could result in shared stewardship.

The Washington Trust appreciates the importance of building a new bridge to serve SR162 as it crosses the Puyallup River and has no interest in delaying this project. The primary issue the ACOE must consider is WSDOT's permit request to include removal of the McMillin Bridge as a condition for construction of the new bridge. We encourage WSDOT to de-couple these actions. Doing so would enable the ACOE to reach a determination of no adverse effect for historic resources regarding construction of the new bridge, thereby expediting issuance of a permit.

We welcome the opportunity to provide further input/background on this important matter and greatly appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Moore". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Chris" and last name "Moore" clearly distinguishable.

Chris Moore  
Field Director

Cc: Sandra Manning, Project Manager, ACOE  
Dr. Allyson Brooks, State Historic Preservation Officer, DAHP  
Roger Kiers, Cultural Resources Specialist, WSDOT